

Ten Ways a Diver Can Protect the Aquatic Realm

Produced by PADI for Project A.W.A.R.E.®

1 Dive carefully in fragile aquatic ecosystems, such as coral reefs.

Although, at first, they may look like rocks or plants, many aquatic organisms are fragile creatures that can be damaged or harmed by the bump of a tank, knee or camera, a swipe of a fin or even the touch of a hand. It is also important to know that some aquatic organisms, such as corals, are extremely slow-growing. By breaking off even a small piece, you may be destroying decades of growth. By being careful, you can prevent devastating and long-lasting damage to magnificent dive sites.

2 Be aware of your body and equipment placement when diving.

Much damage to the environment is done unknowingly. Keep your gauges and alternate air source secured so they don't drag over the reef or bottom. By controlling your buoyancy and taking care not to touch coral or other fragile organisms with your body, diving equipment or camera, you will have done your part in preventing injury to aquatic life.

3 Keep your diving skills sharp with continuing education.

If you haven't dived in a while, your skills (particularly buoyancy control) may need

sharpening. Before heading to the reefs, seek bottom time with a certified assistant or instructor in a pool or other environment that won't be damaged by a few bumps and scrapes. Better yet, take a diving continuing education course such as PADI Scuba Review, the PADI Advanced Open Water Diver course or a PADI Specialty Diver course.

4 Consider your impact on aquatic life through your interactions.

As every diver soon learns, very few forms of aquatic life pose a threat to us. In fact, some creatures even seem friendly and curious about our presence. As we become bolder and more curious ourselves, we may even feel compelled to touch, handle, feed and even hitch rides on certain aquatic life. However, our actions may cause stress to the animal, interrupt feeding and mating behavior, introduce food items that are not healthy for the species or even provoke aggressive behavior in normally nonaggressive species.

5 Understand and respect underwater life.

Through adaptation to an aquatic environment, underwater life often differs greatly in appearance from life we are used to seeing on land. Many creatures only appear to look like plants or inanimate objects. Using them as "toys" or food for other animals can leave a trail of destruction that can disrupt a local

ecosystem and rob other divers of the pleasure of observing or photographing these creatures. Consider enrolling in a PADI Underwater Naturalist course.

6 Resist the urge to collect souvenirs.

Dive sites that are heavily visited can be depleted of their resources in a short period of time. Collecting specimens, coral and shells in these areas can strip their fascination and beauty. If you want to return from your dives with trophies to show friends and family, you may want to consider underwater photography.

7 If you hunt and/or gather game, obey all fish and game laws.

You may be among the group of divers who get pleasure from taking food from the aquatic realm. If you engage in this activity, it is vital that you obtain proper licensing and become familiar with all local fish and game rules. Local laws are designed to ensure the reproduction and survival of these animals. Only take creatures that you will consume. Never kill anything for the sake of killing. Respect the rights of other divers who are not hunting. Avoid spearfishing in areas that other divers are using for sight-seeing and underwater photography. As an underwater hunter, understand your effect on the environment.

8 Report environmental disturbances or destruction of your dive sites.

As a diver, you are in a unique position to monitor the health of local waterways, lakes and coastal areas. If you observe an unusual depletion of aquatic life, a rash of injuries to aquatic animals, or notice strange substances or objects in the water, report them to local authorities, such as the local office of the Environmental Protection Agency or similar organization in your country.

9 Be a role model for other divers in diving and nondiving interaction with the environment.

As a diver, you realize that when someone tosses a plastic wrapper or other debris overboard, it is not out of sight out of mind. You see the results of such neglect. Set a good example in your own interactions with the environment, and other divers and nondivers will follow suit.

10 Get involved in local environmental activities and issues.

You may feel you can't save the world, but you can have a great impact on the corner of the planet in which you live and dive. There are plenty of opportunities to show your support of a clean aquatic environment, including local beach cleanups and attending public hearings on matters that impact local coastal areas and water resources. Know all sides of the aquatic environmental legislative issues and make your opinions known at the ballot box.

We Need Your Support Today...

Divers are conscientious protectors of the underwater environment. You can help preserve this precious resource for future generations by supporting Project AWARE (Aquatic World Awareness, Responsibility and Education). Order the limited edition Project AWARE version of your PADI certification card by adding a donation (minimum \$5) to the Project AWARE Foundation when you replace your current card or complete your next PADI course. All contributions to the Foundation are tax deductible, where applicable, and go toward beneficial programs such as environmental research, ecological cleanups, and public environmental educational programs. Ask your PADI Instructor, Dive Center or Resort for further details. The photo card below is the first in a series.



Sample only

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CAN YOU ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS?

Take this quiz to test your knowledge of the diver's role in the aquatic realm. (True or False)

1. Most underwater life is similar in form and function to life on land, so if it doesn't look or behave like an animal, it probably isn't one.
h T h F
2. Some aquatic animals grow at an extremely slow rate; for example, a branch of coral can take decades to develop.
h T h F
3. Buoyancy control is one of the most important diving skills, not only for safety but to avoid damaging delicate aquatic organisms, as well.
h T h F
4. Underwater hunters should not be concerned with learning about their effect on the marine environment, since it is usually minimal.
h T h F
5. As a diver, you should consider yourself a valuable source of information about changes and disturbances to the areas you dive. You should make your observations known to public officials and environmental groups.
h T h F

How did you do? Look inside this brochure to learn more about your role in preserving the aquatic realm. To find out even more about the aquatic realm and its inhabitants, ask your PADI Instructor and Dive Center about the PADI Scuba Review, PADI Advanced Open Water Diver course, Underwater Naturalist Specialty course and Improve Your Scuba series.

Answers: 1) False; 2) True; 3) True; 4) False; 5) True.

What Is Project A.W.A.R.E.®

Project AWARE (Aquatic World Awareness, Responsibility and Education) is a corporate environmental educational program of PADI Worldwide, the PADI Retail Association, PADI Travel Network and PADI International Resort Association on behalf of the worldwide membership of PADI Educators and Dive Centers.

As the world's largest recreational diving training and retailing organization, PADI recognizes its responsibility to preserve the aquatic environment. Project AWARE serves as a rallying point for PADI's 80,000 plus Members and over 4000 Dive Centers/Resorts worldwide. Through awareness, responsibility and education, PADI believes that divers can make a difference.



Project AWARE celebrates International Year of the Ocean

Ten Ways A Diver Can Protect The Underwater Environment



**Aquatic World Awareness,
Responsibility and Education**

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